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RECOVERY



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Boot the Boot Disks: Multiple Configurations in OS/2 Warp

BY MICHAEL NORTON

A few years ago, a friend mentioned that he was going to take his car into the shop to have the fuel filter replaced. Having become a disciple of "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance," I dissuaded him, droning on endlessly about how easy the procedure was, how much money he could save by doing it himself, even offering to bring my tools and show him how it was done. I could see in his eyes he wasn't fully convinced, but he relented under the force of my evangelical bombast. So, on a bright Saturday afternoon, I found myself bent over the fender of his Honda Accord, twiddling a wrench and enthusiastically proclaiming the virtues of do-it-yourself maintenance.

Perhaps it was karma. Perhaps it was fate. Perhaps it was because my mouth was running faster than my brain. But I deftly managed to twist his fuel line in half, and a 10-minute operation mutated into a four-hour nightmare of automotive stores and misfitting parts.

Needless to say, I became a little more cautious about offering my services, and even more wary of "simple" procedures. It is a lesson I recall often when doing technical support work. Nothing is ever as easy as it looks or as simple as the documentation and sales pitches imply. The reality is that something is probably going to go wrong. The secret, however, is preparing for that contingency.

Contingency Awareness

Of course, you can always reboot. But what if the application or device you are installing alters the CONFIG.SYS (and most of them do)? The standard operating procedure, at least through OS/2 2.11, was to boot from floppies and edit the CONFIG.SYS or rename a backup configuration file — which explained the popularity of SHIFTRUN and quick-loading editors like TEDIT. OS/2 Warp integrated these facilities, but there is an even better method. The archiving facility of Warp can be used to manage multiple configurations. This allows you to maintain a stable configuration to boot and utilize PM applications to determine and resolve a problem.

To set up multiple configurations, create the desired CONFIG.SYS files and select one of the files as the default configuration. On laptops and other machines which are occasionally

connected to a network, select the non-network configuration as the default, since the absence of a connection generates error messages when booting, or worse, can cause the machine to lock up.

Next, rename the alternate configuration files with the filename CONFIG and a one-character extension, and move them into the OS2\BOOT directory on the boot volume. For example, assume you have two configurations, one with networking statements and one without, and that C: is the boot volume. Name the non-network version CONFIG.SYS to serve as the default configuration and leave it in the C:\ directory. Name the networking configuration CONFIG.N and move it to the C:\OS2\BOOT directory.

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The next step is to set up the archive facility so that the archive screen is displayed upon each boot and displays the desired configuration options. Change to the OS2\BOOT directory and remove the read-only attribute ALTF1MID.SCR by issuing the command ATTRIB ALTF1MID.SCR -R, then load the file into a text editor such as E.EXE. Follow the style of the current entry and add an entry for the alternate configuration. To continue our example, the ALTF1MID.SCR file would contain two entries and appear as follows after adding an entry for the CONFIG.N file:

```
X) Original archive from INSTALL created
  11-17-95  2:25:10PM
N) Network Enabled Configuration
```

The option character must be identical to the character used for the alternate CONFIG file extension, and obviously must not conflict with any other options. Save the file and reset the read-only attribute by issuing the command ATTRIB ALTF1MID.SCR +R at a command prompt.

Open the settings notebook for the Desktop by clicking the right mouse button anywhere on the desktop and selecting the Settings option. Go to the Archive tab and select the 'Display Recovery Choices at each restart' checkbox. You will probably also want to increase the timeout interval to allow users to ATDT942-7278 view the menu before the default configuration is automatically invoked. The default value is five seconds; I generally increase the value to 10 seconds. After modifying the settings, close the notebook.

That's it. Every time the machine is rebooted, the Archive menu will appear with the specified optional configurations. If an option isn't selected (or if the ESC key is pressed), the machine will boot using the default CONFIG.SYS. If an alternative configuration is desired, simply select the indicated key from the Archive menu. This technique will prevent you from being snookered by a trap or other error during the boot process after installing a new application or device; simply set up the altered CONFIG.SYS as an alternative configuration. The technique is almost essential for notebooks and other mobiles which are intermittently connected to a network. Give it a try. But if anything goes wrong, don't blame me...

Was this column of value to you? If so, please circle Reader Response Card No. 45.



Michael Norton is the workstation division manager at SoftTouch Systems, which provides both mainframe and PC software solutions. He has written mainframe manuals in addition to articles for

a number of publications. You can reach him at mnorton@softtouch.com.